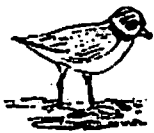


Wednesday, July 11, 2001

Osprey Banding

By FAHY BYGATE

Recently I went to the most wonderful birthday party! The Osprey's of Bay Road are now the happy and doting parents of three new baby Osprey. And after nesting here for three years, this year this pair of birds was part of an Osprey banding program. Members of Massachusetts Audubon Society, the New En-



gland Aquarium, the town of Duxbury and just interested (Interested? Fascinated!) bystanders gathered to watch Norm Smith band the babies. Norm Smith has been banding raptors in our area for many years and is the one can thank for many Snowy Owls that appear on Duxbury Beach in winter. (Norm captures them at Logan Airport and releases them here.)

We gathered on Nancy Bennett's back lawn to discuss osprey and the banding process. The lawn ends at the marsh's edge and the Osprey pole sits smack in the middle of the marsh. As we talked about Osprey we could see the female sitting atop the huge pole. The male was off somewhere, fishing.

These "Fish eagles" are exclusively fish eaters and consequently build their nests along rivers, lakes and coasts. They build huge nests of sticks and seaweed, sod and rubbish atop the highest pole or tree near water. They produce only one brood each year and the typical brood is 2-4 eggs. Both male and female build the nest and both sexes incubate the eggs which require about 30-40 days to incubate. At hatching, baby osprey are covered with down. Their eyes are open but they are completely dependent on their parents to bring them food and to feed them. At about 50-60 days, the young are ready to fly. And, if you think feeding your family is tough, these three young birds will require six pounds of fish a day from their hard-working parents. Once the young have fledged, the birds will prepare to migrate as far south as Chile and Argentina.